

THE
CHRISTIAN PATTERN

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By Hugh Stevenson Tigner

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First Printing

FROM THE SOUTHWELL LITANY:

O Lord, open our minds to see ourselves as Thou seest us, or even as others see us and we see others; and from all unwillingness to know our infirmities, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee.

From moral weakness of spirit; from timidity; from hesitation; from fear of men and dread of responsibility, strengthen us with courage to speak the truth in love and self-control. From weakness of judgment; from the indecision that can make no choice; from the irresolution that carries no choice into act; and from losing opportunities to serve Thee, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord.

DUP. EX. 8-56 *From infirmity of purpose; from want of earnest care and interest; from dullness of conscience; from feeble sense of duty; from thoughtless disregard of consequences to others; from a low idea of the obligations of our Christian calling; and from all half-heartedness in our service of Thee, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord.*

From weariness in continuing struggles; from despondency in failure and disappointment; from overburdened sense of unworthiness; from morbid fancies of imaginary back-slidings, raise us up to a lively trust and hope in Thy mercy, in the power of faith and prayer; and from all exaggerated fears and vexations, O Lord, deliver us.

From self-conceit, vanity and boasting; from affectation and untruth, conscious or unconscious; from pretence and acting a part which is hypocrisy; from impulsive self-adaptation to the moment in unreality to please persons or make circumstances easy, strengthen us to manly simplicity; and from all false appearances, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee.

From love of flattery; from over-ready belief in praise; from dislike of criticism; from the comfort of self-deception in persuading ourselves that others think better than the truth of us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord.

From all love of display and sacrifice to popularity; from thought of ourselves in forgetfulness of Thee in our worship; hold our minds in spiritual reverence; and in all our words and works from all self-glorification, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord.

From pride and self-will; from desire to have our own way in all things; from overweening love of our own ideas and blindness to the value of others; from resentment against opposition and contempt for the claims of others, enlarge the generosity of our hearts and enlighten the fairness of our judgments.

From all jealousy, whether of equals or superiors; from grudging others success; from impatience of submission and eagerness for authority; give us the spirit of brotherhood to share loyally with fellow-workers in all true proportions; and from all insubordination to moral law, just order and proper authority, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord,

In all times of temptation to follow pleasure, to leave duty for amusement, to indulge in distraction and dissipation, to degrade our high calling and forget our Christian vows, and in all times of frailty in our flesh, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord.

From strife and partisanship and division among the brethren, from magnifying our certainties to condemn all differences, from all arrogance in our dealings with men, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord.

Give us knowledge of ourselves, our powers and weaknesses, our spirit, our sympathy, our imagination, our knowledge, our truth; teach us by the standard of Thy Word, by the judgments of others, by examinations of ourselves; give us earnest desire to strengthen ourselves continually by study, by diligence, by prayer and meditation; and from all fancies, delusions, and prejudices of habit or temper or society, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord.

Chiefly, O Lord, we pray Thee, give us knowledge of Thee, to see Thee in all Thy works, always to feel Thy presence near, to hear and know Thy call. May Thy Spirit be our will, and in all our shortcomings and infirmities may we have sure faith in Thee.

Finally, O Lord, we humbly beseech Thee; blot out our past transgressions, heal the evils of our past negligences and ignorances, make us amend our past mistakes and misunderstandings; uplift our hearts to new love, new energy and devotion, that we may be unburdened from the grief and shame of past faithlessness to go forth in Thy strength to persevere through success and failure, through good report and evil report, even to the end.

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THE CHRISTIAN PATTERN

Chapter I

THE CHRISTIAN PATTERN

I

I was past thirty and had been a minister of the gospel for nearly a decade before it became clear to me what Christianity specifically is. This may seem a surprising confession, since a minister of the gospel ought to know what the gospel is. Yet it is not so surprising. There are always degrees of knowledge. No one should be surprised by the confession that one was formerly more ignorant than he is now. Indeed, a confession of present ignorance should not evoke any gasps of amazement, for we are all ignorant of some things that we ought to know and of many things that others know.

Moreover, one's greatest discoveries are seldom made in youth. I believe in inspiration and revelation; but the more knowledge and hard work a man has to his credit the better his chances to be inspired, and one has to be prepared by experience in order to see revelations. I could be taken into a radar laboratory and shown all the closely guarded secrets and still not know anything about it. I am unprepared to receive a revelation in that field.

It not only takes experience to understand what Christianity means, but there happens to be a welter of confusions clustering about that subject in the modern epoch. These had to be cleared up. Such confusions, I presume, always exist, differing chiefly in form from age to age. They

do not present the same problem to everyone, but since they played an acute rôle in my own case I feel prompted to pay them a passing respect.

II

In any of the authentic expressions of Christian life one will find clear recognition of a conflict between Christianity and "the world." But in our time this difference has been greatly dulled. There has been a pronounced tendency to make the gospel of Christ and the gospels of the world lie down beside each other, like the lion and the lamb of prophetic vision, and scratch each other's backs. Many have hailed this development as a liberal advance toward fulfillment of the prophetic vision. I have become convinced that a more fitting metaphor is that one about the wolf in sheep's clothing.

In these latter days the Christian gospel has been interpreted to mean almost anything and everything that current fad and popular taste have wanted it to mean. And conversely, the values and viewpoints of the secular world have clothed themselves with Christian pretension. For instance, Jesus has been called the founder of modern business; and the deeds of the Marxist totalitarians have been eulogized as the practical application of the Christian ideal. Again, we have been smilingly told, and have loudly applauded the news, that Christianity is just being human, or civilized, or a good citizen, or attending to one's business, or donating five dollars to the Red Cross. Again, huge numbers of "Christians" have ceased to see any point in sending missionaries to convert the heathen, it being thought sufficient to send them engineers, agriculturalists, technicians, doctors, scrap iron and sewing machines—things that will

be "practical" and "raise the standard of living." Besides, it is bigotry to regard the people of another culture as heathens. And these same Christians have lost their sense of urgency in giving their children a specifically religious education, a regular liberal education being looked upon as the equivalent of, or as an adequate substitute for, a religious education.

The spirit of the age has been to soften the strong tones, step down the high tensions, of the Christian message in the interest, I suppose, of making the message tamer, easier, more credible, less disturbing. There has been a gradual dispensing with the old acrid distinctions between the lost and the saved, the children of light and the children of darkness; and a general whitewashing of Christianity's critical view of life, wherein man is pictured as walking a perilous path through this world because he stands in danger of taking, or of being beguiled into taking, the road that leads to his undoing and destruction.

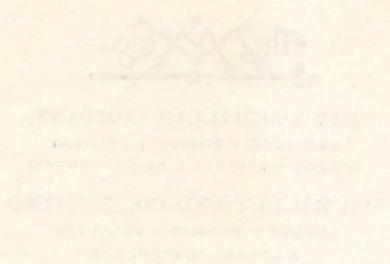
Into this confusion creeps the sentiment and doctrine of those liberals who would transcend Christianity in the interests of universality. Noting that we need something to unite mankind, and that mankind is segmented by a variety of religions, these feelers after universality would find in the various religions a common stock of religion that transcends all particular branches. And thumbing through the sacred writings and records of the major historical religions, they report that they find this common stock. All religions, says the Reverend John Haynes Holmes, if they be "compared with one another after the method of the great science of comparative religions," will be found to "spring from the same roots," to "follow the same pattern of progress," and to "contain the same content of precept and idealism." Consequently, Dr. Holmes concludes: "The modern man,

who sees this, is tired of the long and acrimonious contentions of true and false, of good and bad, of orthodox and heterodox, of Christian and pagan.”¹

Even without this abundance of confusions it would be hard enough to get Christianity adequately and properly defined. Dr. John Brown, a Scotch divine of the last century (1784–1858), wrote a biography of his father in which he gave some account of his Uncle Ebenezer. Uncle Ebenezer was a Presbyterian clergyman, and in his old age he had an experience that shook his theological framework. He had determined, against the pleas of his family, to ride on his pony across the open country in a heavy snowstorm to fulfill a preaching engagement. On the way pony and rider tumbled into a ditch, and while they were wallowing helplessly in the snowdrift some rude fellows came along who were carting whiskey to the town. Rough and wicked creatures though they were, they played the good Samaritan to the old man, got him up and dusted him off, gave him a drink of whiskey (which he gratefully accepted), set him on his mount, and made a downright tender time over him. Next presbytery day, after the ordinary business was over, Uncle Ebenezer rose up (he seldom spoke) and said: “Moderator, I have something personal to myself to say. I have often maintained that real kindness belongs only to true Christians; but (and then he told his story) more true kindness I never experienced than from those lads. They may have had the grace of God, I don’t know. But I never intend again to be so positive in speaking of this matter.”

Uncle Ebenezer was neither the first nor the last Christian to be humbled, broadened and puzzled by such things. Christians are inevitably convinced that being a Christian is a very important and necessary thing. They have the au-

¹ Holmes, *Rethinking Religion*, pp. 37 and 39.



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thority of personal experience and an incomparably rich history to buttress this conviction. But ever and anon they are meeting something that seems, according to their formal definitions, to be outside the Christian pale, and yet, by the nature of its spirit, to have the likeness of Christianity.

Christians in all ages have sought to define, formalize, systematize and organize the divine dynamic they have known to be stirring within themselves, moving through history, and recreating the creation. There is nothing inherently wrong or stupid about this, though it may result in errors and absurdities. It is quite necessary. Just as we have to employ buckets, conduits, tanks and ponds to handle water, so are we forced to use forms, formulas, definitions, orders, systems to handle the quintessential stuff of Christianity. But either man's system-making powers are tragically limited, or else God is so busy bringing forth new phenomena, that our forms and formulas are forever being proved faulty, our systems inadequate. We suppose we get it figured out just what a person must do and be and subscribe to in order to be a Christian—and lo and behold, we run into a case that breaks the rules and yet somehow seems to meet them, too. As with Uncle Ebenezer, our formulas "get rolled around on a snowy moor and receive gifts of comfortable whiskey from the sons of Satan."²

In view of these confusions it is no wonder that people get mixed up about the Christian gospel, that some never get it straightened out, never find out what it is, and even go so far as to repudiate it altogether in the name of what they call common sense, or intelligence, or idealism. But with this I am done writing about the difficulties (which are far

² Nathaniel J. Burton, *Yale Lectures, Etc.*, ed. Richard E. Burton, New York and London, 1888, p. 148. It is from Burton that I borrow the incident about Uncle Ebenezer.

more complex and rugged than I have indicated), and shall get on with the more positive part of the story.

III

When I tell you in a few simple words what my discovery was it will seem singularly unarresting, obvious and even platitudinous. It was this: the Christian life is a God-centered pattern of faith and action which can be outlined or indicated by five words. And the words are: worship, thanksgiving, humility, service (or sacrifice), and love. Familiar and hackneyed words those are, but what a fathomless wealth of meaning they contain, when pried into; and what a radical difference they make in human life, when understood and accepted as one's personal platform and plan of action!

The essence of Christianity is a God-centered pattern of living:—what is the significance of that? And how does it make for a peculiar and distinctive design of human response and endeavor? Well, the first thing to be noted about it is the contrast with its opposite, namely, a self-centered pattern of living.

A character in one of Dostoevsky's novels refers to the people he calls "worldlings" and describes them as those who "fear only what directly threatens their personal interests." Elaborate that insight a bit and you have a telling description of the self-centered pattern of life—those people who are really concerned only with what immediately and directly affects them, who are motivated only by self-regarding aims, and who are generally wrapped up in themselves.

The varieties of this pattern are numerous. Some of them are manifest, popularly recognized, and widely abhorred; and some of them are not manifest, popularly understood

or judged for what they are. This pattern obviously includes those who are morally and emotionally isolated, the miser and the misanthrope; the fellow who is unperturbed by suffering and injustice so long as it is some distance away; the person who has no lively sense of being involved in mankind, no feeling of identity with his fellows. Again obviously, this pattern includes the man of greed and lust, of ruthless ambition, of will to power; the person who seeks and loves only that which serves his own whim or pleasure or passion or convenience or gain or security or glory. Yet these drives may be disguised, need not show themselves in any bizarre manner or make one a technically lawless character. One may act within the outward forms of propriety and legality—indeed, if he is prudent he will do that—and still have an eye only for that which promotes himself, expresses himself or gratifies himself. There are plenty of people who are walking advertisements of Emily Post who are ruled by self-regarding motives: the desire to feather their nest, to win applause, to attract attention, to get ahead of the Joneses, to pay off a score against somebody, to enjoy a life of ease, and so on. There are even people who would like the kingdom of God to come, and are willing to work for its coming, provided it can come through them and they get the credit for it.

A couple of years ago a book was published purporting to set forth a new science of hand-reading. I didn't read the book, only a squib about it, but I was interested in some of the diagnoses it contained. According to the report, certain well-known people had submitted their hands for interpretation. The hands were thrust through a curtain so the expert was not supposed to know the identity of their owners. When the hands of George Bernard Shaw were thus presented the diagnosis was that they belonged to a person

"whose creative powers are nourished by a spirit of combat and opposition." The whole world has a feeling this hit the nail on the head. Be that as it may, it describes one of the multifarious forms the self-centered pattern of living can take.

This pattern also includes those who are so concerned with their own concerns that they cannot be concerned with anything else. For instance, the person who is absorbed with anxiety, be it for his health, his soul, his reputation, his appearance in the sight of men, his future, or whatnot. Also, the person who is consumed with self-pity, with gloom or with grief. This may seem a shocking and uncharitable thing to say. It is of course true that none of us can miss the experience of anxiety or fear or self-concern or gloom or grief. These are inevitable visitations to us vulnerable mortals; they are integral parts of our education. But they present us with one of our problems, and the problem is to get out of them and rise above them. The person who becomes absorbed in his troubles (and very real troubles they may be) can become entombed within himself, quite as effectively entombed within himself as the miser, the sensualist, the person of greed or vanity.

This problem of getting out of ourselves is one of the perennial and universal human problems. We start out, through no fault of our own, on a self-centered basis. As someone has put it, a baby is a kicking little egotist. One of my liberal friends told me that after becoming a father he was not only convinced of the truth of the doctrine of original sin, but also inclined to reaffirm the doctrine of infant damnation. Psychologically, each of us begins life as if he were the center of the universe, as if our desires and whims were the rules that should govern the behavior of the world around us. And for a few months or years our wishes do

govern to a considerable extent the behavior of the little world we know. But in reality we are not the centers of the universe. Sooner or later we discover this stubborn fact, and are called upon to make an adjustment to it. In this vast scheme of creation, which precedes us and will outlast us, which lends us our life and supports us, the self is too small a thing to remain enclosed within. Those who never get out of it into a larger, richer, truer and freer realm of being are as doomed as the chick that can't break out of its shell.

When the New Testament speaks of worldlings and worldly living, of dwelling in darkness and death, it is talking about self-centered living. When it speaks of getting out of darkness into light, of crossing over from death into life, of finding salvation, it means finding the center of one's life in God.

And here we come to a second cardinal point of the statement that Christianity is a God-centered pattern of life: what kind of a god becomes the center?

IV

In a psychological sense, everyone recognizes a god, or recognizes something he treats as if it were God. In the case of the self-centered person it is one's own ego that occupies the throne of God. When it is the self that one loves, adores, worships, serves and obeys, one's self is one's god.

And there is another perversion of religion that should be noted in this connection: it is when one rises above self-centeredness, but rises only up to the level of some self-adoring group of which he is a member. This group—be it a class, a clique, a party, a race, a nation, or any other fragment of mankind—may elicit an extreme degree of loyalty, self-discipline and sacrifice in its members, and in this case

the members have certainly risen into a higher form of being than vagrant individualism. But if it is a group that seeks its own advantage and magnification to the exclusion or subordination of every other group; if it recognizes no law or truth or purpose or value above itself, and makes a god out of itself, this is only a frightfully dilated and reinforced form of selfishness. It is a case of the devil on wheels. We have a spectacular example in the German nation under nazism. But one should hastily add that practically all groups, cliques, parties, races and nations are tempted to lean in this direction. Sometimes even a church leans that way.

This is what the Bible means by idolatry: men creating their own god, setting up something much less than God and calling it God. So the question arises: who or what is the god in a God-centered pattern of living?

For the Christian that is answered surely and clearly. The god who is the center of the Christian's life is the God revealed in Jesus. That is a crucially important point.

The history of mankind from earliest times and among the most primitive peoples shows a universal recognition of the existence of a divine power or powers. The human race has never been short on religion or worship as such. But the key question is: what kind of a god has been recognized and worshiped? The Gallup Poll made a survey in 1944 and estimated that 96 percent of the people in our land profess belief in God, and 76 percent in life after death. This is neither surprising nor anything to be especially cheerful about. While it is preferable to a brash atheism that unleashes the heart's anger, pride and lust, it doesn't necessarily take us anywhere.

It is hardly remarkable that frail human creatures, set within the mystery and majesty of the creation, should sense

the existence of a power transcendent to themselves. This is not enough. In order to establish a significant relationship with the transcendent power one must have some definite understanding of what the transcendent power is and is like. A vague religion is a feeble religion. It is this vagueness which Christianity removes. The character of God has been revealed. In the Christ, and also in the prophets, and in the Scriptures, and in the lives of the saints and apostles and martyrs, and in the experience of the church down through the ages, we have a clear and sufficient indication of the nature and character of the one, real, true, eternal and most high God. No mortal man understands it all, but a significant degree of understanding has been placed at our disposal. It requires a lifetime, perhaps many lifetimes, to explore the meaning of this revelation of God, but we have the clues to guide us in this endeavor. Christians are not left in the dark concerning the Almighty.

v

A third factor in this definition of Christianity as a God-centered pattern of living seems almost too obvious to mention, yet it is the most vital feature of all: and that is the fact that it is a pattern of *living*. Ninety-six percent of our people believe in God. The Letter of James has something pertinent to say about this. "You believe in one God," wrote James. "Well and good. So do the devils, and they shudder. But will you understand, you senseless fellow, that faith without deeds is dead?" (2:19-20)³ It is quite plain that a great many of this overwhelming majority of our population do not even shudder. They do nothing at all. They

³ From *The Bible: A New Translation* by James Mofatt. Harper and Brothers, publishers.

profess to believe in God, and then go ahead and act as if they didn't. Their piety is not vital with them. It exists in a few particles of gray-matter or flickers of feeling safely segregated in some unimportant chamber of their personalities. It does not operate at the center of their lives. These people are not Christians, for they do not have the life in them.

When the Christian gospel is received by a person he is bitten with it. A germ of new life is put into him. Jesus likened it to a bit of yeast which a woman put into three measures of flour until the whole of it was leavened; or to a mustard seed, one of the smallest of all seeds, but which, when planted, grows up into a plant in whose branches the birds can lodge. No, one doesn't forthwith sprout wings. He may not soon become even a character you can admire or depend upon. But have patience: you can't plant your garden and go out next day and pick tomatoes. It takes time and cultivation, and then some of the tomatoes will be rotten.

A Christian is a person with a certain direction of growth in him. He has set his controls, as the bombardiers say, for a particular run. He may not know—in the beginning he cannot possibly know—very much about what is going to be involved in that journey; he will discover more about that along the way. But he has taken hold of something that will take increasing hold of him, eventually changing his outlook, reshaping his purposes, modifying his reactions, re-evaluating his values, altering the structure of his consciousness, bringing more and more of his personality under its influence.

The Christian's relationship between himself and God is a moral relationship. That is to say, it is a matter involving choices, actions, a responsible stand. He is one who has

come to an understanding of what God requires, and has said "Yes" to it. Being a mortal creature, he understands but partially and obeys more or less imperfectly. But he is a person standing under moral obedience, under spiritual discipline, to what he conceives to be the will of God. He has found in the Christian gospel the model to which he endeavors, with many fumblings and failures no doubt, to make his life and character conform.

Obvious as this point may be, it is nevertheless the point where the relationship between man and God most commonly suffers a short circuit. Our religious beliefs and professions frequently do not leap across that chasm between passive assent and dynamic faith. There are also many of us for whom the Christian gospel is primarily a set of requirements for somebody else to obey. Christianity would be a wonderful thing, these people sigh, if it would only change the world. They somehow skip themselves. The most wonderful thing of all is to have it change oneself.

Chapter II

WORSHIP

I

If Christianity be a God-centered pattern of living, it is quite plain that the Christian is one who has learned to worship and who practices worship.

Worship is often spoken of as a very great mystery. Some of the most difficult and nearly incomprehensible of all discourse has been delivered on that subject. It is a great mystery. But all things, if you carry your investigation far enough, are great mysteries. Every bug and blade of grass leads to an abysmal mystery. Even a speck of dust. When physics climbed onto its high horse in the last century it was going to dispel a host of mysteries and reduce many unknowns to the known by showing us how much of life is merely a matter of matter. This project went along very nicely until the physicists began studying the nature of matter. As they brought their investigations down to a really fine point matter disappeared into thin air, as the layman would say, but I believe their name for it is "relationship of energy."

Perhaps the reason why so much has been made of the mystery of worship is that worship deals not only in symbols, but in symbols of symbols, and in symbols of intangible things which are apprehended by human experience but not perceived directly by the senses. The holiness of God, the power of God, the goodness, grace and mercy of

God, the will of God, are not realities that can be seen, heard, touched, tasted or smelled. Neither are goodness, evil, love, hate, loyalty, treason, repentance, redemption, or personality. These most real things are utterly intangible, and can be understood only after a person has gone through a considerable amount of experience. Yet dealing with them does not seem to me a bit more mysterious than to be told that the chair on which you sit, or the page of print before one's eyes, is a relationship of energy.

A good deal has been made of the difficulty of explaining worship to the uninitiated. William Temple, the late Archbishop of Canterbury, said: "Worship is one of those things which it is very hard to describe to anyone who has no living experience of it, or to justify to anyone who has no appreciation of the value of it." That is very true, and I recall the sense of relief it gave me to find this brilliant churchman expressing my own feeling of inadequacy. I well know the difficulties of understanding the meaning of worship and of learning how to practice it, because I know the long and winding path I myself had to travel; and I have known something of the difficulties of others.

Worship is one of those things that has to be experienced in order to be understood: which is another way of saying that only those who understand it understand it. But I doubt if this is worth emphasizing, because it is also true of practically everything else. A person of sixty years cannot explain to one of sixteen what it is like to be a grandparent. Have you not returned from some place where you had an unusual experience or adventure, and said helplessly to a friend: "I can't describe it to you; you should have been there"? It takes a fairly mature experience of life for one to have an appreciation of the rich and complex meanings of worship, because worship deals with the deep and complex

things of life. But I do not believe it is harder to understand than any other of the important truths and meanings by which men live.

II

What is the basis of worship? Why has it always been a common pattern of action through all the ages and among all the peoples of which we have any knowledge?

Some would say—especially those who do not make a practice of worship and therefore do not understand it—that worship is based on a feeling. Some people happen to have a taste, temperament or disposition for it, while others do not. And they suppose that answers the question. It does not. Worship is not, like stamp collecting, violin playing or deep-sea diving, a matter of peculiar bent. Our feelings are involved in it, to be sure, just as they are involved in almost everything else that we do. But underneath any feeling is a hard stratum of fact. Worship is based upon the fact of man's dependent, subordinate, inferior position in the creation.

What! Inferior? Were we not created in the image of God? Do we not sit on the top rung of the ladder of creaturehood? Were not all things placed under our feet—

All sheep and oxen,
Yea, and the beasts of the field,
The birds of the heavens, and the fish of the seas?

Are not our capacities and talents immensely, if not infinitely, greater than those of all other creatures? Yes, that is true. And it is one of the places where our pride is apt to run away with us.

We are very smart, but we are not omniscient. We are most ingenious, but we are not omnicompetent. We are

strong, but not omnipotent. We are self-reliant, but not self-sufficient. And for all our privilege and majesty as human beings, we are still creatures in a creation of which some Other is Lord. We stand upon a ground we did not create; we are surrounded, supported and affected by things, by powers, by processes, by laws we did not institute; our very life is a borrowed force. We did not create ourselves or the means by which we were created. We were given life; we had to be born (and we had no vote on the question); we shall die (and we shall cast no vote on that either). And all along our way what is written in the book of Jeremiah remains profoundly true: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (10:23). We are not the lords of creation or the masters of our fate. We do not even know what the morrow will bring forth. During happy days of efficient and successful action we may not be aware of this situation. But in a deep and final sense it is irrevocably true, and sooner or later we butt into it.

This fact is the basis of our worship; and whatever the feelings are that prompt us to worship, they are grounded on this fact and derive from appreciation of it. It can be said, therefore, that worship is a most natural and eminently reasonable response for men to make, since it springs out of our situation in the universe. Yet one hesitates to make a great deal of the naturalness of any human action, because all our actions are more or less natural. Nature is a paradoxical thing: it is composed of opposites. Moreover, man has the freedom to make choices, and whatever his choices are, they are supported by a part of his nature. Worship is certainly buttressed by a part of our nature. But whenever this is said I think of the hymn written by Frederick William Faber which begins:

God's glory is a wondrous thing,
Most strange in all its ways;
And, of all things on earth, least like
What men agree to praise.

There is a part of our nature which is ready to worship. There is another part which rebels against it. It is this issue which lights up the meaning and the importance of worship.

III

There is a profound difference between those who worship God and those who do not. The outlooks, the attitudes, the basic reactions to life of these two groups are fundamentally different—as is witnessed by some fragments of ancient story.

In the book of Genesis we read that when Abram was ninety years old and nine the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am the Almighty God. Live ever mindful of my presence, and be thou perfect. And I will make a covenant between me and thee." Abram fell on his face and God talked with him; and to dramatize the difference this experience made in his life, Abram's name was changed to Abraham.

Abram had come to recognize that there is an Other higher and mightier and holier than himself unto whom he must bow and yield. Henceforth his life was to be under obedience to this authority.

The same pattern is repeated in the story of Isaiah. As a young man, doubtless wondering what to do with his life, Isaiah had a vision of God in the temple. He was given to understand God's greatness and man's smallness, when man stands by his own power and under his own sovereignty.

Where Abram fell on his face, Isaiah confessed his feeling of unworthiness: "O Lord, I am a man of unclean lips dwelling among a people of unclean lips." But God raised him up in his humility and gave him a sense of worthiness. An angel touched his mouth with divine fire, saying: "Lo, thine iniquity is taken away." And when Isaiah heard the call, "Whom shall I send?" he was ready to answer, "Here am I, send me." Another man put himself under obedience to the divine. That's human nature—and it isn't.

We have a different reaction in the story of Jonah. Jonah received a call to go to the heathen city of Nineveh and proclaim God's judgment against its people's wickedness, and God's abundant mercy if they would repent. But Jonah was a self-willed man. He did not like the Ninevites, did not want them to be saved; and he did not like the idea of running errands that did not originate with himself. So he decided to go AWOL. He scampered aboard a ship that was sailing for Tartessus, beyond the pillars of Hercules, imagining that if he could reach this place on the outermost rim of the known world he would be so far away as to be beyond the rule of God, and could do as he pleased with impunity. His effort to escape was not a success, but he tried; and so far as the story goes he spent the rest of his life in futile rebellion against the sovereignty of God.

That is a part of human nature, too. There is something in us—a pride, a self-will, a love of independence and self-sufficiency, a desire to do as we want to do, an aspiration for omnipotence—which doesn't like the idea of bowing down to an authority above ourselves. This is the theme of the old myth about the builders of the Tower of Babel.

These men (it was the whole human race, so the story indicates) were well aware of their human inferiority. They met one day on the plain of Shinar and held a general coun-

cil as to what they could do about it. "Come on," they finally decided, "let us make bricks for building, and give them a good burning." Why a good burning? Because they were going to do something extremely bold. They needed bricks without weakness, bricks that would last forever. When they had made bricks they got mortar (for this was to be no simple stack-up job) and said: "Come on, let us make a name for ourselves; let us build a city and a tower whose top will reach to heaven." What was the idea? The same as that given by the serpent to Eve in the garden: eat this and you will surmount the limitations of mortality, becoming a god. The same as that which prompted the giants in ancient Greek legend to pile Mount Ossa on Mount Pelion: in order that they might conquer the gods on Mount Olympus. By building a tower as high as heaven these men were out to become the equal of God, to seize omnipotence. They were trying to put to rout everything higher and mightier than themselves so that there would be no longer any reason to bow down and worship, nothing above their own will and desire they need obey.

We have been reading about that sort of thing in our newspapers. One evening in 1934 Franz von Papen said to a companion in Paris: "If we do not get what we want, everybody will regret it. We will destroy the whole of Europe. It will be the end of the continent."¹ No doubt this seemed like an idle threat at the time because it represented such obvious madness. People in fits of anger, frustration or bitterness often feel that way, but they seldom have the means to do very much about it, and as the months and years go by they usually soften up a bit. But in this case there was no softening. The anger became a dynamic move-

¹ Quoted by Phillippe Barres in the *New York Herald Tribune Weekly Book Review*, February 6, 1944, p. 2.

ment. The movement got control of a powerful and resourceful nation. It developed an ideology, a philosophy of life, a plan of action in keeping with this mad spirit. It repudiated the idea of God and the moral law as an old Jewish superstition which had been foisted upon the world for the sinister purpose of keeping superior races and strong nations from properly asserting themselves. "There is no moral law above our own desire," proclaimed this movement, "no ethical or spiritual principle to which we must submit, if only we have the boldness, the resolution, the organization and weapons to make our own will prevail."

And thus we have the logical outcome of men without worship (or of men who worship only a magnified image of themselves), of men without the "fear of the Lord." Of course the failure or refusal of men to worship God need not necessarily show itself in such violent and bitter rebellion. As a general rule it does not. It takes a relatively long period of time for history to develop a grand catastrophe. The loss of worship results first in something less spectacular—in a slow decline of devotion to the highest principles, a creeping indifference to righteousness, a sly and quiet moral decay. More and more people become less and less inclined to check, measure and square themselves with the rules and ideals proclaimed in the gospel. They can live for months without thinking of such things in any vital way; and as the months and years slip by these things become less and less real to them. The call of God sounds fainter and feebler until it isn't heard any more. Before long a new generation has arrived on the scene to take over. Having been educated by the religious indifference of the elders, it is a little bit more indifferent. After this unraveling has gone on for a while, without any discernible disaster, the day of reckoning at last falls. A crisis emerges: it is discovered that

the foundation of the commonwealth has been undermined.

That is the difference it makes whether or not men worship, and what they worship.

IV

What do we do when we worship? We recognize the existence of God and of our dependence upon him. We look unto God as our sovereign, and upon ourselves as material for obedience to him. We endeavor to make our peace with God. We seek more knowledge of his law (or will or purpose), and seek to bring our lives into a more perfect accord with it.

Thomas Henry Huxley, in the previous century, preached the gospel of modern science. His theme song ran like this: "Sit down before the facts as a little child, and let your intelligence humbly follow them to whatever conclusion they may lead." Huxley had a sadly limited appreciation of what constitutes a fact, but he had a sound theme song, for he had borrowed it from an older gospel. It was a paraphrase of Jesus: "Except ye turn and become as little children, ye can in no wise enter the Kingdom of Heaven." That is what we do when we worship.

We humbly kneel before God as little children—recognizing his holy sovereign majesty and our subordination to him in "praise"; thanking him for his great mercy and help, and asking in faith for a continuation of that mercy; confessing our shortcomings and infidelities as his children and servants; endeavoring to set ourselves right before him by repentance, and by opening our minds and hearts to receive more light on our paths. There are various ways of express-

ing the quest of our worship, but no words put it better than these from the forty-third Psalm:

O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me,
Let them bring me unto thy holy hill.

In worship we endeavor to see this light and to view ourselves by its illumination; to be reminded of the divine truth we so easily forget, and to press on into the discovery of more of it.

And here is an appropriate place to point out the distinction between Christian worship and other kinds of worship. The key was given by St. Paul when he said to the Athenians, who had many objects of worship, including an altar TO AN UNKNOWN GOD: "What you worship in ignorance I set forth to you in knowledge."²

The God whom Christians worship is immeasurable, fathomless, and has his secrets past our finding out; but he is not the Great Unknown or Unknowable. Certain very definite and most important things about him are known, and Christian worship is guided and informed with this knowledge:

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,
And bow myself before God most high?
He hath showed thee, O man, what is good:
What doth the Lord require of thee,
But to do justly, and to love mercy,
And to walk humbly with thy God?

Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord,
Or who shall stand in his holy place?
He that hath clean hands and a pure heart;
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,
Nor sworn deceitfully.

² Acts 17:16 f.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and strength; and thy neighbor as thyself.

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

And so on and so on through a vast panorama of prophecy, proclamation, insight and revelation.

In Christianity the worshiper knows what he is about. Or, what is perhaps still more to the point, he can find out what he is about. The Christian knowledge of God is made available to him. It is presented to him in the church ritual. And that brings up a question that must be thrashed out.

v

Whenever the subject of worship is mentioned our minds automatically think of the formal service of worship conducted in the church. That, as I shall presently try to show, is a proper reflex. Yet it is not a warming thought to a great many people.

The Gallup Poll which reported ninety-six percent of the American people professing belief in God, also reported forty-two percent admitting they had not been to church for at least a month. Thus about half the people who call themselves religious do not, for one reason or another, think it necessary to attend the church service of worship.

Among that forty-two percent are a certain number who will put up an argument about it. The argument runs like this: "One can be a good Christian without going to church; it's the life and not the formalities that count. Just look at some of your church-goers and see what hypocrites they are. As for worshiping, God is everywhere and can be worshiped anywhere: in one's living room while one sits in a com-

fortable armchair and reads a good book, or hears a sermon over the radio, or does both at the same time; or just sits in meditation. Or out in the garden, or on the golf course, or by the side of some babbling brook, or at a symphony concert."

These people, I fear, do not understand the meaning or practice of Christian worship. For one thing, they do not understand that worship is public and communal as well as private and individual.

I certainly do not wish to underrate the importance of private worship. Unless worship becomes private and individual, unless it is taken home and taken into one's business, until it becomes an inner light and an inner discipline, an awareness of one's own responsibility before God—a "practice of the presence of God," as Brother Lawrence put it, or a living "as ever in my great Taskmaster's eye," to quote Milton—until this is done to a significant degree the purpose of worship has not been fulfilled. But worship is also a public affair. It is not just myself alone with God. It is myself and my fellowman, it is human togetherness, it is the *community* before God. In worship I not only discover my true relationship to God, but also my true relationship to my fellows. It is quite important that I should worship God in their company, as one of them, and that I should learn to say with them "Our God" as well as "My God."

A distinguished minister of the last century admitted that once on a time he had gagged over that classic phrase in the church rituals which addresses the people as "Dearly Beloved." "What!" he would say to himself, "all those un-developed and miserably flawed and often personally disagreeable saints out there in the assembly, *dearly beloved!* How could a man say that and claim to speak honestly?"

But he eventually learned to say it without wrenching his sincerity, and to like to say it. He came to where he could say it to all church people and even to all mankind, because he learned that the phrase was not intended to express any private opinion, but to express God's attitude toward men, who loves us not so much for what we are as for what we have it in us to become.

No, we have not understood the full meaning of worship until we understand that it is a public, a common, a humanly mutual affair. It is I *and* you making our obeisance before God. It is I discovering that my neighbor is in the same boat with me in the presence of the Creator. Until we approach the Almighty in the company of our kind, as members one of another, we have not worshiped in spirit and in truth the God whom Jesus revealed.

Worship is a public affair in still another sense. It is a festive occasion. It is a matter important enough to be marked off by a public acknowledgment, and this public acknowledgement is an inherent part of worship. One day each week the routine of labor is broken, the busy hum of the world is quieted, in order that men may recognize in a special manner that we live not by bread alone but also "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." And we repair—or some of us do—to the church, dramatizing the importance of the occasion by putting on our Sunday best. The person who remains at home in his bathrobe and "worships" by turning the dial of his radio to a religious broadcast is missing out on something. He isn't putting anything into it. He isn't doing anything to testify that worship is an important matter. He isn't offering anything.

Anyone who understands very much about himself has learned that it is even more necessary to make demonstrations for ourselves than for others. We say and think and

intend and resolve and profess a lot of things without knowing whether we really mean them, or how seriously we mean them, until we test ourselves. Sure, we believe in God and in the worship of God, and feel downright pious in saying so. But how many people mean anything by it? Do they mean enough to go to a little trouble? I am not asking if they would undergo persecution in loyalty to religious faith, or fight for freedom to worship. Will they get up out of a warm bed by nine o'clock in the morning, shave, do their hair, dress, leave the paper unread, make the preliminary dinner preparations, and go to church? Is worship important enough for them to trudge through as much rain as they will weather to get to the movies? Is it important enough for them to do a little planning in its behalf, such as getting to bed on Saturday night before two o'clock on Sunday morning? Will they overcome a slight disinclination to worship at that particular time on that particular day?

All this is a very important part of worship because it tests our loyalties, professions and purposes. Many people seem to feel that the worship of God is a matter in which they are entitled to be governed by mood, feeling, impulse and sense of convenience. But they are not so governed in any matter which is recognized as truly important. We discipline ourselves, overcome our feelings and disregard our moods when it comes to doing important and necessary things; and if we didn't, very few important and necessary things would get done.

Still another sense in which worship is public (and here we get down to the brass tacks of the case) lies in the fact that it is public worship which instructs, guides and to a great extent inspires private worship. It is from the light on the church's altar that the fire of worship is kindled in

individual souls. It is worship in the church and by the church that keeps worship alive, that teaches us what worship is, and supplies us with the Christian forms, standards and content. If there were no churches and no church worship there would in time be no worship anywhere; or, to put it more accurately, the worship that would exist would become something other or less than Christian worship. Whenever one of the armchair addicts refers to his Sunday morning meditation as worship it is not impertinent to inquire what the framework and materials of his meditation are. Is he merely musing or daydreaming? Or does he have before his mind's eye some part of the body of Christian truth? There is of course no guarantee against daydreaming and wool-gathering even while one is in church. But at least the service of worship sets the body of Christian truth before us.

Now and then, to be sure, a religious genius appears who seems to be greater than the church, who challenges the church and puts new life into it. Names readily occur to us: Francis of Assisi, Wycliffe, Huss, Zwingli, Luther, Calvin, George Fox, John Bunyan and John Wesley. But all these individuals, despite what they said and did, lighted their torches from the glimmering flame they found in the church, and challenged the church in the name and spirit of the church's own gospel. Francis, for example, proclaimed his independence from church rule by saying, "No man showed me what I ought to do, but the Most High himself revealed to me that I ought to live according to the pattern of the holy Scripture." That was true, and it is always true for those who live a godly life. But it was the church which introduced Francis to the Most High, which gave him the information about Christ who became his perfect example, which preserved through the ages and

taught him in his youth the holy Scripture. Indeed, it was while attending mass one day in the half-ruined chapel of St. Mary of the Angels that he heard the Scripture which he chose for his rule of life.

VI

The church service of worship—with its prayers, its hymns, its scriptures, its litanies, anthems, sacraments, sermons, ceremonies and symbols, its rhythms and movements—is not only an expression of worship, but also a stimulus to worship and an instruction in it. The church's rituals are a proclamation and dramatization of the Christian truth about God that we need to know, be mindful of, and adopt as the principles and ideals of our conduct.

I recall some of the litanies used in a service of worship once familiar to me:

From an unquiet and discontented spirit, from despondency and gloom, from fears and misgivings, from doubts of thy boundless love, and from forgetfulness of the manifold goods of life, O Lord, deliver us.

It was quite a revelation to me to be taught that these things are not simply unfortunate, but wrong, and ought to be fought and resisted as much as hate and greed. Nor did it ever do me any harm to read or hear:

From all jealousy and envy, from all unkindness, from offense given or taken, from unrighteous anger and an impatient spirit, from a hard and unforgiving temper, and from evil speaking, O Lord, deliver us.

And all of us at one time or another will find an eye-opener in this;

For the discipline that teaches us what we need to learn, for the burden that strengthens, for the failure that is true success, and for the sorrow that enlarges the sympathy of the heart, we give thee *thanks*, O Lord.

Those people who call themselves Christians but do not bother to attend the church service of worship, except on the most convenient of rare occasions, are depriving themselves of a lot of help—if it is help in leading the Christian life that they really want. They are somewhat like the man who intends to become wise but refuses to avail himself of what the sages before him have discovered, and avoids the company of others seeking to acquire wisdom. You will find that, as a rule, these people remain religiously immature. They may grow and become highly intelligent in some fields, but in matters of religion are likely to remain about where they were as children in the Sunday school.

This brings up the case of those who claim they can worship well enough in the great out-of-doors or at a symphony concert. I happen to like nature and music myself. Nature is a part of God's creation and has the power to remind us of God. But how much of the Christian truth about God does it remind us of? It certainly does not reveal as much as Jesus does, or the Bible, or the records of Christian experience through the ages. I have been intoxicated by the magnificence of a tree, but I have never been conscience-smitten by one. I have been melted down by the sight of flowers, but I never received from such an experience a fresh insight into the meaning of the Beatitudes. I have been awed by the view from a mountain top; but I never acquired from it any of the humility of unselfish service, or the humility that makes us quick to forgive offenses, or the humility that makes us willing to admit that we were mistaken and need to search for more truth. Never, after hear-

ing a symphony concert, did I resolve to amend any of my faults, for I was never made aware of any faults by a symphony concert, and neither was anybody else. Nor did I ever receive from such a source an understanding of the grace of God which gave me new hope or a new sense of the worthwhileness of my little endeavors.

VII

Why come to church? And what is one supposed to do in church? We are told by the religion which built the church that God does not live in temples made by human hands, as a king lives in his palace, and as the pagans of St. Paul's day supposed their gods to do. Yet we call it a holy place. What makes it so? The purpose and function of it. It is a holy place because holy things are symbolized there; divine truth is proclaimed, expressed, suggested, sought and received there. People come there to be reminded of holy things, to contemplate holy things, to hear about holy things, to receive holy things, to renew and make testimony of their devotion to the truth that relates our life to the almighty and eternal God.

The manner in which Christian truth is symbolized and proclaimed differs somewhat among different churches, but the essential point is the same. In the Roman church, for instance, the main symbol of Christian truth is a wafer on the altar, and the Roman form of worship appeals chiefly to the eye. In the Reformed churches the main symbol of Christian truth is a Bible on the pulpit—the Word which is to be read, expounded, heard and understood; and the Protestant form of worship appeals chiefly to the ear. This has its disadvantages as well as its advantages. It requires good acoustics in the church edifice, and calls for hungry, reverent, alert and trained hearers.

What is one supposed to do in church? First of all, he is to come with a sense of the importance of the occasion, and with some appreciation of its purpose. When a Roman Christian enters his church he has certain definite things to do. He may do them in a purely mechanical manner with an unconsecrated spirit, or he may not. But at least he has a prescribed routine to follow which is designed to help him worship. He dips his finger in the basin of holy water at the door and crosses himself. As he enters his pew he genuflects before the altar. Then he kneels in his pew, takes out his rosary and repeats prescribed prayers. When a Protestant Christian enters his church he is put almost entirely on his own. It is hoped that he will set his thoughts toward the "eternal verities," composing and preparing himself by prayer and meditation to worship God and to receive a new measure of divine truth. But there is nothing prescribed in a book of rules.

He may sit down and start whispering with his neighbor. He may look over the ladies' hats, or notice how the light reflects on somebody's bald pate, or turn to see who is coming in, or count the number of pipes on the organ. Or he may slump into one of those meditative moods wherein he plays that unusual hand of bridge over again, or figures up his income tax, or rearranges the living room furniture, or plans next summer's vacation. That is why we have the prayer which says: "Deliver us, when we draw near to thee, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship thee in spirit and in truth." And this gives the cue for a concrete suggestion: on entering a church before the service begins, take a hymnal and read one or several of the prayers therein—they are there for the purpose of directing our thoughts and our hearts toward moral-spiritual truth. Or

read some of the scripture selections, or one of the hymns.

Then the service begins and we are called upon to listen: to forget ourselves, close our senses to distractions and pay attention to the meaning of words, whether printed, spoken, recited or sung. Even as we make a joyful noise unto the Lord in the opening hymn we are expected to listen to the message of its words, to listen inwardly as we join in the responsive reading, to listen to the anthem and the scripture and the sermon, which last is sometimes something of a trial but seldom a bad discipline for us.

A young girl of my knowledge who was trying to find out the whys and wherefores of religion by attending a Congregational church reported to her parents: "I don't know why I go to church. I don't do anything but just sit and listen." This girl had also attended Roman churches (her mother having been reared in that form of worship), and her comment was probably prompted by the contrast. Yet she laid her finger on an important point. Protestant worship calls for a lot of listening, and people have to learn to listen just as they have to learn to do anything else. Some people never do learn to focus their attention; they don't even listen to you in a private conversation, but while you are talking think of what they are going to say next.

Listening in a service of worship is not solely a matter of giving undistracted attention to the business at hand. One's attitude is deeply involved in it, and there is an active and an inactive kind of listening. Some people just throw their minds into neutral; some have their ears peeled for errors and discords; some listen as if they were sitting in judgment on a stage performance or an oratorical contest; some listen for something that will support their hobbies, flatter their prejudices or back up their peeves; some listen as if they were saying, "Now let's see if you can interest me." These

are not the attitudes appropriate to worship. Such listeners do not give anything or offer anything or move to meet God halfway. They are simply making demands. They lack the humility, the sense of need and the love which belong to the true worshiper. The true worshiper is a humble and hungry seeker. He knows he has need of finding the bread of heaven, and is set to receive some truth about God, about man, about life, that will help him to live better. And I dare say that he can nearly always find it.

He may not find it in the sermon, which occupies a place of considerable prominence in the Protestant form of worship; for the greatest sermon cannot speak to everybody's condition at the same time. He may find it in some sentence of scripture, in a hymn, a prayer, an anthem, or in being at worship with his fellows. But I dare say that if he properly seeks he will find something that will be to his benefit—something that will open a new truth or open an old truth in a new manner; something that will stimulate, kindle, refresh or command him in a moral-spiritual way; something that will help raise up a fallen spirit, a tottering faith, a crumbled courage; something that will sweeten a bitterness or console a grief; or something that will mark off the true from the false; something that will admonish; or something that will indict that which should be put aside and swept away.

Chapter III

THANKSGIVING

In the Letter to the Ephesians (5:19 f.) we read:

. . . be filled with the Spirit; speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father; subjecting yourselves one to another out of reverence for Christ.

In that brief passage we find all the cardinal features of the Christian pattern enunciated or implied; thus indicating how the various elements of the Christian life blend into one another, partake of the same essence, and form one indivisible whole. And it is significant that thanksgiving is one of the items prominently mentioned. "And let us give thanks always for all things . . . to God the Father." This statement—and you see that it is a very strong statement—imputes a two-fold importance to thanksgiving. On the one hand, the possession of a thankful heart is a Christian duty, a required goal or ideal, something that the Christian must aim to attain. On the other hand, the possession of a thankful heart is the Christian's privilege and reward, a sign that he is a Christian, a token that he is living in a state of grace.

It is quite plain that Christianity not only takes thanksgiving with utmost seriousness, but also means by it something more profound than is commonly meant. Probably everyone whose spirit is not poisoned with bitterness or

entombed in self-pity responds with thankfulness on many occasions. The degree and depth of this response varies with individuals, but it is a natural response. Even animals appear capable of it. Fling a handful of corn to the hens and they seem to be grateful. We are gladdened by gifts, by deliverances, by pleasures, successes and victories, and I believe this joy is normally accompanied by a measure of thankfulness. But if thanksgiving be limited only to such occasions, and if it be identified with our enjoyment of congenial circumstances, then it is a fickle thing, and the only difference between the thankful and the unthankful man is a difference of fortune.

This kind of thankfulness will not suffice for the Christian. With him thanksgiving is an abiding thing, a constant attitude, a habitual response, a continuous type of outlook on the universe. It is not dependent on the weather. And one's possession or lack of it does not signify a mere difference of circumstances, but a difference in moral character and spiritual understanding. If thanksgiving were anything less than that it would deserve no mention as a part of the Christian pattern of living.

At the end of his famous essay on "Self-Reliance" Emerson speaks of finding "peace," by which word he meant approximately what an older terminology called "blessedness." "A political victory," he wrote, "a rise of rents, the recovery of your sick, or the return of your absent friend, or some other quite external event, raises your spirits and you think good days are preparing for you. Do not believe it." The turns of the wheel of fortune can never serve as the basis for your peace. And the reason why this is so is that the darn wheel keeps on turning. It is the same with thanksgiving as with peace.

If thanksgiving be only the overflow of our joy in vigor,

in prosperity, in success, in victory, it cannot occupy a permanent place in our lives. Life at its pleasantest always contains a number of uncongenial factors. I recall a friend who had the habit of always greeting me with, "Well, how is every little thing today?" Of course I understood this was not really meant as a question, but was the equivalent of "Hello" or "Good morning." Yet it sometimes disturbed my equilibrium because my mind had an automatic tendency to take it literally; and whenever one begins making an inventory of "every little thing" he often discovers that he is in a bad way. What is more, trouble and sorrow are always just around the corner, visiting a neighbor or waiting to call on you.

No, the thanksgiving of Christians does not depend on a particular set of events, but exists in spite of events. It comes out of the depths of their religious understanding of life, and you will find this fact indicated in all the great examples and genuine expressions of thanksgiving.

You will find it in the old prophet Habakkuk, a man well acquainted with disaster, who wrote:

Though the fig tree do not flourish,
And there be no fruit on the vines;
Though the product of the olive fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock be cut off from the fold,
And there be no cattle in the stalls;
Yet I will exult in the Lord,
I will rejoice in my victorious God!
For God, the Lord, is my strength;
And he makes my feet like hinds' feet,
And he makes me walk upon my high places.¹

¹ The first nine lines of this quotation are from Smith and Goodspeed's *The Bible: An American Translation*, The University of Chicago Press.

You will find it in the Apostle Paul. In his Second Letter to the Corinthians he catalogued some of the things he had been through. He had been often at the point of death; five times he had received thirty-nine lashes from the Jews; three times he had been beaten by the Romans (who didn't bother to count the number of strokes in their whippings); once he had been pelted with stones; three times he had been shipwrecked, and once his ship had been driven helplessly by a storm for a whole night and day. On his numerous long journeys he had been in all kinds of danger—from desert and sea, from rivers and hostile towns, from robbers, from false brothers. He had been sick and nearly starved, he had been ill-clad and parched with thirst, he had spent many a sleepless night. "But," he concluded, "here I am alive, chastened but not killed, grieved but always glad, a pauper but the means of wealth to many, without a penny but possessed of all."

Paul's last letter was written to the church in Philippi. He was getting along in years, he was in prison at Rome, he was near the end of his rope. But it is one of the bravest and most ebullient of his writings, and the word "rejoice" runs through it like a theme song. Near the close of it he said: "I have been initiated into the secret for all sorts and conditions of life, for plenty and for hunger, for prosperity and for privations. In him who strengthens me I am ready for anything."²

If you are looking for an example of what Christianity means by thanksgiving, there it is. You see at once that it springs from the man's religious understanding of life; that it does not come from the surface of human experience—

² The two quotations from Paul are from *The Bible: A New Translation* by James Moffatt. Harper and Brothers, publishers.

the situation of the moment, the mood of the hour—but from the depths of human experience. The man has found a condition that underlies all conditions, is appreciative of a circumstance that persists beyond all circumstances; and he can go through hell and high water, as Paul did, and still be grateful.

How shall we describe the inner mystery of this thing? Let me try to find words for it in this manner: Paul (and I am using him simply as an outstanding Christian example) had found a blessing which lies underneath our little blessings, the blessings of the day and of the season which make us glad and arouse our gratitude, but which come and go. As a Christian convert he had discovered himself to be the recipient of something superbly precious and everlasting. In his own words he would have summarized it by saying he had been given to see the divine truth brilliantly manifested by Christ, or that he had found the new life which comes from accepting that truth.

He was a man in the grip of a deep appreciation of what had been given him. He had been given life. He had been set in the midst of the creation. Then his eyes had been opened to the wonderful meaning of life, to the glorious love of God which hovers over the creation. In short, Paul was a man who had come to realize his utter indebtedness, to sense the infinite charity of which he was a recipient. He had found a meaning in life that exceeds the value of all the pearls in the sea, and which outlasts the evolution of the sun and moon. He had been *given* all this! It had been bestowed upon him, and offered to all men, by God the Creator.

That is how and why it is neither impossible nor absurd for a Christian to speak of giving thanks always, through

thick and through thin, to God the Father. This is perfectly reasonable. But it takes a religious understanding of life, a religious approach to life, a religious response to life, in order to see the reasons for it.

When I was a boy we used to sing in our church a hymn called "Count your blessings."

Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

Not very much in the way of poetic insight or expression; just the sort of doggerel that anybody could write; and the melody to which it was sung was only a rhythmic jig. It measured up to none of the standards of what we regard as good hymnology. But it had one strong point in its favor: it stated the truth. It is a fact that anyone who has the insight and the imagination to recognize a blessing when he sees it will be amazed at the number he has received, and at the greatness of their breadth and depth and height. But the trouble is that we are often blinded to this truth by self-centered considerations and selfish passions.

Sometimes we are so wrapped up in a consciousness of unsatisfied ambitions and of frustrated desires that we are not aware of any blessings. Sometimes it is envy that blinds us: we are so fretted by a feeling that other people have so many more blessings than we do that we cannot appreciate the magnitude of our own. Sometimes it is self-pity that blinds us: we are so wrapped up in the consciousness of our own troubles that we are aware of nothing else. Sometimes it is bitterness that blinds us: we are so consumed with anger and resentment over what has happened or not happened that we can only snarl and gripe. Again, it is pride that afflicts us: we see all the good things we enjoy as our own handiwork and nothing but our just desert. The proud man has

no sense of what has been given him, only a sense of his earning power and of what he has done for himself.

All these forms of self-centeredness have a common root, I suppose, in a basically wrong approach to life. Perhaps the thing might be termed *infantilism*. But whatever you call it, it is that approach to life wherein we are conscious only of our wants and demands. The attitude of such a person toward the whole blooming creation is that of a hungry man with plenty of money in his pocket who walks into a restaurant to order his fare and be served with it. And, by crackey, it had better be good! He's only standing on his rights, isn't he? He's paying for it, isn't he? There is no worship in such a man, no sense of indebtedness and dependence, no offering of himself in service and love, no profound thanksgiving.

And this indicates to us why thanksgiving is so important. It signifies a certain pattern of response to life, a certain kind or quality of person, a certain form of moral character. A psychiatrist has said that the typical confession of the warped, bruised, twisted, delinquent, anti-social persons who become his clients is one of "ardent accusation," first against one's parents, then against one's whole ancestry, and finally against life and creation. In other words, they are persons who, for one reason or another, are without the grace of gratitude. I believe that is true of all negative and destructive persons—the whiners, the hecklers, the complainers, the sour people, the bitter people, the people of vengeance and criminality. Conversely, I am sure that you will find a spring of thanksgiving bubbling in the people of opposite character.

He who is in possession of a thankful heart can never be completely defeated. He will not make an unconditional surrender to despair or to bitterness, to envy or to self-pity.

He will be disposed to take what he has and do the best he can with it. He will be a giver of himself to the welfare of others in an effort to make some payment for the vast bounty he himself has received.

Chapter IV

HUMILITY

I

"Yea, all of you," says the First Letter of Peter (5:5), "gird yourselves with humility to serve one another; for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak," says the Letter of James; and "receive with meekness the implanted Word which is able to save your souls."

How plainly those texts explain the compelling reasons for humility. We need it, says Peter, in order to serve one another, to live in fellowship with our brethren. Why is that so? One reason is that in order to live in fellowship with our brothers we have to be able to forgive; and no man can forgive until he understands how much he himself needs to be forgiven. Another reason is that brotherhood requires acceptance of the principle of equality. The proud man, by his pride, separates himself from his fellows. He is too good in his own estimate, and too censorious in judgment, to associate himself on a plane of equality with common folk. He sees the splinter in his brother's eye, but cannot see the plank in his own. Besides, he does not want to live in fellowship with his brothers, but in splendor above them; and he does not want to serve them, but to be served.

We need humility, says James, in order to be teachable, in order to find out what the law of God is and to obey it. I am always being surprised by the number of people who have no real humility before the mighty face and the awful

majesty of God's creation. When Margaret Fuller made her much quoted announcement, "I accept the universe," it seemed a ridiculously egotistical thing to say, and Thomas Carlyle pointed this out by quipping back, "Gad, she'd better." Of course we had better. But a lot of us don't do it. We sit in judgment on the universe. We discover things about the creation that do not suit our taste, and take the position of injured innocence. We find out, for instance, that sooner or later all men have to suffer. Or we find out that the principle of sacrifice is one of the inherent laws of creation. We don't fully understand it, and we don't like it. Many of us seem to think we have a right to disapprove of the way in which God has ordained things to work. And so, instead of finding out what God's laws are and humbly coming to terms with them, we live in a sort of self-righteous rebellion, saying, "He shouldn't do that to me!"

The proud cannot learn—that is, learn in the profound sense of acquiring wisdom about life. They do not want to be taught but to be confirmed. They are not of a disposition to listen, but to assert. They do not seek to obey, but to dominate.

No one ever caught hold of the character of Jesus with more insight than did St. Paul in his Letter to the Philippians. He was writing about Christians having in themselves the same mind that was in Christ, who, said Paul, "though existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto (the law of) death, yea the death of the cross." That, remember, is our Model; and it calls to mind a number of things Jesus said and did.

It reminds me especially of what took place in that upper room on the occasion of the last supper when he took the loaf and the cup saying: "This is my body broken for you; this is my blood poured out to ratify the new covenant between God and man"—a few words and a few gestures so wonderfully expressive of his whole life. John's gospel says that Jesus washed the feet of his disciples in preparation for this meal, as a dramatic parable to them. Luke tells a different incident, but of the same character. The disciples got into an ugly quarrel that evening over who should have precedence in the group. Jesus said to them with quietness and sadness, I am sure: "Now, you know how the rulers of the gentiles lord it over them, and how their authorities take the name of 'Benefactor.' It is not to be that way among you. He that is greatest among you must be like the youngest, and he who is chief, like a servant. I am among you as a servant."

II

Humility is a very difficult virtue. And while I presume that the most difficult thing about any virtue is the practice of it, I am inclined to say of humility that the most difficult thing about it is the understanding of what it is. Of all the Christian virtues I suspect it is the easiest to parody, the easiest to misunderstand, the easiest to go astray in.

In the popular philosophy of the present day humility is not rated as a virtue but as a handicap, a personal defect, something to be overcome and gotten rid of. The popular stereotype of humility is Caspar Milquetoast, the little fellow who gets pushed away from the counter, stepped on and shoved around, and is too weak or frightened to protest; a person who begs for his breath. In popular thinking humil-

ity is identified with abjectness, weakness, timidity, lack of resolution, an inferiority complex.

One look at Jesus ought to be enough to sweep that error away. Jesus was crucified, but he was never pushed around. He was crowned with a mocking diadem of thorns, but he was not browbeaten. He did not whine or crawl on all-fours; he never cringed; he was not weak; he was not frightened, or lacking in poise, purpose, resolution, confidence or dignity. We can dismiss at once the popular parodies of Christian humility as bumptious ignorance.

But even in those days when humility enjoyed a more respectable rating in popular ideology and received acclaim from men, it was no easier to possess in spirit and in truth. The devil can make use of all the virtues. By twisting and warping a little he can turn almost everything to his account: the greatest truth can be made absurd, the normal can be made abnormal, the beautiful and sacred can be prostituted. But I doubt if any virtue can be so easily undone as humility, or so readily turned into something counterfeit.

Humility is one of those things which, if you are sure you possess it, you most likely don't. C. S. Lewis, who has written a very shrewd book about the devil in his *Screwtape Letters*, points out that the devil always likes to have a man aware of his virtues, especially of humility. If he can catch us in a humble act or frame of mind and smuggle into our thoughts the gratifying reflection, "By Jove! I'm being humble," he has turned our humility into pride. And then if we awake to this danger and struggle against it, we may become proud of our struggle to remain humble. And there you have humility defeated again.

Not only is it easy for humility to become transformed into its opposite: it can be easily diverted from its true pur-

pose and object. If one strains himself to be humble he may become so preoccupied with the achievement or practice of humility that all he achieves is this self-concern. Immersed in a consciousness of himself he may cultivate an attitude of self-contempt, which is a good starting point for contempt of others. Or he may fall into thinking that humility means a good man calling himself vicious, a pretty woman trying to believe she is ugly. This injects pretense into the practice of humility, and keeps one's attention continuously reverting back to himself.

This pitfall brings us up against the problem of humility's elusiveness. It would almost appear that achieving humility is analogous to achieving happiness or originality. Happiness and originality are by-products. We may find happiness if we don't look for it too explicitly. If we become absorbed in the quest of it we are certain to be miserable. It is a thing that may come to us when we are looking for something else. Likewise with originality. The person who wants to be original had better not exert himself in that direction. He will become either a tiresome exhibitionist, or a repeater of someone else's clever tricks. If one is interested in being original he had better forget about it, and just be his own sincere self. If he is that, he will be original.

The question is this: Can a person achieve true humility by making the achievement of humility his aim? Can humility be striven for as one of the supreme goals of the Christian life? Is it to be regarded as an end, or as the means to an end? Do we find it by seeking it, or do we find it by seeking something else?

I cannot give an emphatic Yes or No to these questions. Perhaps the true answer lies between Yes and No, or includes both Yes and No. I am not certain; but I can say something helpful on the subject.

III

Some of the great characters of Christian history have spoken as if humility were an explicit end to be sought, have spoken as if it were the end to be sought above all others. St. Theresa of the sixteenth century called humility the "queen and empress and sovereign" over all the virtues. St. Augustine at the beginning of the fifth century called humility the first article of the Christian religion, and also the second and the third. There is certainly no doubt here in the matter of emphasis. But, great as my respect for Augustine is, I feel that as a general proposition he roasted the goose too brown.

For Augustine himself it was perhaps proper that he should have set humility so high. Anyone who reads his *Confessions* will understand why he did this. As he abundantly shows in this autobiography, he was a particularly tough customer for Christianity to conquer. He had to go through an inordinate struggle with pride in all its forms. He had excessive intellectual pride, supposing himself to be in possession of about as much wisdom as anyone could have, and recognizing no need for further enlightenment. He loved the arts of oratory and rhetoric for the sake of the display they afforded. He was hungry for praise and fame. He loved his own pleasure, convenience and whim above all else, cherishing what he called a "vagrant liberty." The essence of his pride lay in his desire and determination to be a law unto himself, not in any violent or criminal sense, but in the sense of living for himself.

Augustine describes his first serious encounter with the Bible as follows:

I resolved then to bend my mind to the holy Scriptures that I might see what they were. But behold, I see a thing not understood by the proud, nor laid open to children, lowly in access, in its recesses lofty, and veiled with mysteries; and I was not such as could enter into it, or stoop my neck to follow its steps. For not as I now speak did I feel when I turned to those Scriptures; but they seemed to me unworthy to be compared with the stateliness of Tully: for my swelling pride shrunk from their lowness, nor could my sharp wit pierce the interior thereof. Yet were they such as would grow up in a little one. But I disdained to be a little one; and, swoln with pride, took myself to be a great one.

Augustine, you see, was a very hard candidate for Christianity. He not only had the common resistances native to the human creature, but being a person of extraordinary gifts he was able to throw these talents into the support of his self-will. So he had to be captured for Christ like the city of Jericho: the bastion of his pride had to come tumbling to the ground. Naturally, this ordeal caused him to fix on humility as the most difficult and important thing to achieve, caused him to write it down as the first, the second and the third article of the Christian life.

I have gone into these details about Augustine, not for the sake of embellishing a story, but because one finds mirrored there a great deal that is in some of us, and something that is in most of us.

Augustine's emphasis upon humility had its wisdom. For him, and for some others (who may be more numerous than we imagine), that emphasis was right. Yet I am inclined to think that as a general rule it is out of focus. I cannot bring myself to say that humility is *not* an end which the Christian must seek; but I must also call it the way to an end. I should

not call it the first, second and third articles of the Christian life; but I must also say that no article of the Christian life can be possessed without it. We cannot truly worship without it; we cannot know the fullness of gratitude without it; we cannot be genuine servants without it; we cannot live in loving accord with our fellows without it. Yet I would not say with St. Theresa that humility is queen, empress and sovereign over all the virtues. Rather I would say that humility is the handmaid of the queen, the one who always accompanies the empress, the one who announces or who opens the door for the sovereign. The queen is Love, the empress is Truth, the sovereign is God.

IV

One of the greatest expressions of Christian humility comes to us from the fifteenth century in the form of a book and in the person of its author, for he wrote it out of his life. I am referring to *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis.¹ This book breathes humility as a flower exudes perfume. But the theme of the book is not humility; it is love and service and obedience to the rule of God. "There is nothing sweeter than love," says the *Imitation*, "nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing broader, nothing more profound, nothing fuller, nothing better in heaven nor in earth; for love is born of God. . . . He who is not ready to suffer all things and to stand at the will of his beloved is not worthy to be called a lover." Love is the song, humility the accompaniment.

¹ Recent scholars have come to the opinion that the *Imitation* was written by Gerhard Groot, who lived a generation earlier than Thomas à Kempis, the traditional author. But this is one of those scholarly discoveries that makes very little practical difference, for both men belonged to the Brothers of the Common Life, saw eye to eye with each other, and lived after the same character.

The purpose and object of humility transcend humility. The purpose is to turn man's attention away from himself, to free him from pride and self-will and self-centeredness. The purpose is to direct our attention to God, who is the Object of man's humility and the Cause of it. The aim is not so much to become humble as an end in itself as to become humble *in order that* we may do and be certain things. For instance, in order that we may be willing to sit down before the truth and admit where we are wrong. In order that we may be able to forgive offenses, remembering that we too have given offense. In order that we may become servants of the good, and serve it in purity of heart—not to win something for ourselves, but to *serve the good*. As C. S. Lewis has illustrated it, the humble man is one who can build the best bridge in the land, or design the most beautiful cathedral in the world, knowing he has done this and rejoicing in it, but being no more glad than if someone else had performed the same service for mankind. What an ugly thing it is when people vie with each other as to who shall receive the badge for doing the most. What an unfortunate thing it would be if the allied nations, after this war is over, should revive that old controversy as to "who won the war." This kind of thing answers no questions, solves no problems, does nothing but feed pride and sow bitterness and discord among people who ought to co-operate.

One of the most perfect examples of the meaning of humility is found in the Fourth Gospel's description of the eclipse of John the Baptist by Jesus. John had preceded Jesus, had paved the way for him, had made a considerable stir with his preaching of repentance. He baptized Jesus. But not long afterward he was being supplanted by this One he had launched, as it were. Some of John's followers became envious and worried. They didn't like to see this up-

start cutting into the prestige of their doughty leader. So they went to the old prophet, saying: "Master, that man who was with you across the Jordan, and to whom you yourself gave testimony, is now baptizing, and everybody is going to him." But old John was not perturbed. In fact, he was well pleased. And his answer was: "He must increase (grow greater and greater), but I must decrease (become less and less)."

And so it is with everyone who would lead the Christian life. The "I" in us must make way for a higher Authority. That is humility.

Chapter V

OF HUMAN PRIDE

I

I should like to add a footnote to the discussion of humility, a footnote quite as long as the original article, by writing of the same thing in terms of its opposite, namely, pride.

There are a number of words in our language (in all languages, so far as I know) that have diverse meanings. This is not only confusing to foreigners trying to learn our language; it is also confusing to people whose mother tongue is English. *Pride* is one of those words. If we say that so-and-so is a person of pride, we may be paying him a compliment; or we may be making a heavy indictment against him.

I remember going into a barber shop one morning when I was about twelve years old with a freshly washed and therefore very wet head. Barbers do not like to cut wet hair. I offered my apology and explanation. The barber accepted it graciously and commented on the condition of some of the heads that were presented to him. "Some people don't have any pride," he went on to say, meaning that they didn't care how dirty their heads were. And as barbers often don't mind being voluble, garrulous, loquacious, verbose, prolix and redundant, he capped that observation with another: "I always like to see a boy who's got some pride." He probably said a good deal more along the same lines that I don't

remember, but for a long time afterward the word *pride* stood in my vocabulary surrounded with a warm glow of righteousness. And that is quite in keeping with one of the accepted definitions of the word. As Webster has it: "Sense of one's own worth, and abhorrence of what is beneath or unworthy of one; lofty self-respect."

Yet, as I later found out, the word has another and quite different meaning. Pride or its equivalent is mentioned numerous times in the Bible, and never in a commendable sense. "Pride goeth before destruction." "He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart." And so forth. During the Middle Ages the list of "seven deadly sins" drawn up by the church was headed by pride. The best known religious thinker of the present day in America has fastened upon pride as the source of man's sin. The round and thorough thrashing given the Pharisees by Jesus and the gospel writers was for their pride.

This last is very impressive because the Pharisees, as we commonly rate people, were not a conspicuously bad lot. Quite otherwise. They were pious and patriotic members of Judea's middle class. Their moral standards were high, and if they did not always live up to them in every way, neither does any other group, including Christians. At a time when a decadent Greek culture was being foisted upon that part of the world, they were dedicated to the preservation of the morally superior Jewish culture. Considering how Jewish culture cradled and nourished Christianity, as well as opposed it, the world probably owes the Pharisees a debt. Yet they got an unqualified excoriation for their pride. And that is the authentic Christian judgment on pride wherever it is found.

In the Revelation of St. John these words are addressed by the Righteous Judge to the church in Laodicea:

You say to yourself, "I am rich, I have become wealthy, I have need of nothing." But you do not know that it is *you* that are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked. Therefore I advise you to buy of God gold that has been tested with fire, so that you may be truly rich; and white clothes to put on, to keep your shameful nakedness from being seen; and salve to put on your eyes, to make you see.

This suggests what pride is according to that other meaning which the barber did not indicate. In this older and classic sense, Webster defines pride (and it is his first definition of the word) as: "Inordinate self-esteem; an unreasonable conceit of one's own superiority, which manifests itself in lofty airs, distance, reserve, and often in contempt for others." That states very well the meaning of pride, as Christianity understands it, except for one aspect which I shall come to presently.

II

Pride is that which prompts us to hold others in contempt. This contempt has various forms and many different expressions. In the thirty-first Psalm we read:

O how great is thy goodness,
Which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee.
In the covert of thy presence thou shalt hide them from the
pride of man.

The author of that Psalm understood how terrible the pride of man can be when it breaks out in violence uninhibited by the fear of God, striking down and stomping upon everything and everyone that stands in the way of its self-assertion. Those emancipated from all humility, lifted up into arrogance and organized for the full assertion of their arrogance, have ever and anon in the course of history

spread terror and destruction over the earth. They are something for a man to be hidden from.

Yet there are quieter kinds of pride which are also informed with the spirit of contempt for others, and many of us are guilty of it. The people who are different from us, even in small and superficial matters, are often looked upon, for that reason alone, as belonging to a different species from ourselves. Anyone will be amazed, I suspect, when he studies the attitudes in his own community toward other groups. People with college degrees are apt to look down upon those without them; city dwellers are apt to look down on farmers, white-collar workers on other kinds of workers. The side of the railroad track on which one happens to live seems to make a tremendous difference in most towns. And so on through a whole maze of petty distinctions that have no significant bearing upon the things that really count. We often forget to scratch the surface of our fellows and look for the common humanity underneath.

The character of Shylock in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* was not admirable. He was after his "pound of flesh." But he made one eloquent and true speech. "Hath not a Jew eyes?" he asked. "Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?" It is well to remember that truth in all human places and on all occasions.

It is also well to remember another famous remark made by one as he watched a fellow being led to the gallows: "There, but for the grace of God, go I." That is often truer than we like to admit, and the proud never do admit it.

If you read mystery stories you may be familiar with those of G. K. Chesterton whose detective was a priest named Father Brown. Father Brown was of course a perfect wizard who never failed to find his man, and one day he reluctantly told an American visitor the secret of his uncanny success. "You see," Father Brown began, "it was I who killed all those people." The American gasped at that (Americans are always naïve in British stories), and Father Brown repeated it so the statement could soak in. "You see, I murdered them all myself, so of course I knew how it was done. I had planned out each of the crimes very carefully. I had thought out exactly how a thing like that could be done, and in what style or state of mind a man could really do it. And when I was quite sure that I felt exactly like the murderer myself, of course I knew who it was. . . . It was once suggested to me by a friend as a sort of religious exercise."

"No man's really any good," Father Brown went on to say, "until he knows how bad he is or might be; till he has realized exactly how much right he has to all this snobbery and sneering and talking about 'criminals' as if they were apes in a forest ten thousand miles away . . . till he has squeezed out of his soul the last drop of the oil of the Pharisees; till his only hope is somehow to have captured one criminal and kept him safe and sane under his own hat."¹ And that, brethren, is about as profound a parable and true a sermon as I know.

We are often separated from our fellows through the pride of success. The late Dr. Richard C. Cabot told a story about a friend of his who played the cornet and was an enthusiastic member of a brass band that sometimes serenaded

¹ From G. K. Chesterton: *The Secret of Father Brown*, Harper and Brothers, publishers.

about the streets of their native town until the wee hours of the morning. After one such adventure this fellow found himself near daybreak a long way from home but near the office of the railroad company for which he worked. Deciding that it was too late to get any sleep, he went up to the office, opened his desk and sat down to work about five o'clock in the morning. It so happened that the energetic president of the railroad was in town on a tour of inspection, and being an uncommonly early riser, found this fellow exhibiting this rare devotion to his job. Such enterprise and loyalty deserves its reward, and within a few weeks a very considerable promotion for Dr. Cabot's friend came through. Unless this man had a rare sense of honesty and humor, he probably got to imagining in later years that his success was attributable entirely to the law that the cream always rises to the top.

III

Pride not only isolates us from our fellows; it also isolates us from God. And that is the aspect which Webster's definition does not clearly bring out, but the one which Christianity appreciates most keenly. The proud feel self-sufficient. They do not recognize that what they possess was not achieved or taken solely by their own wit and will and merit, but came to them through the providence of God. And they do not feel the need of anything other than what they already have: they are quite good enough as they are.

It was for this that the Christians of Laodicea stood under condemnation. They were not accused of being bad folk. There is no doubt but that they actually were better than many other people in their city. But they were satisfied with themselves. Nothing further needed to be done to

them, in them, for them, or by them. Their redemption had been completed.

This was the case with the Pharisees. Obviously better than many other people in the Jewish community, they had no sense of their own need or nakedness. Jesus made a parody on this, for the purpose, says Luke, of teaching a lesson to those "who were confident of their own righteousness, and thought nothing of others." Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee stood up and uttered this prayer: "O God, I thank thee that I am not as other men, greedy, dishonest or adulterous—like that publican, for instance." He probably stated the facts. But he was guilty of pride. And, said Jesus, it was not the Pharisee but the publican who went back home with God's approval.

The Pharisees lacked humility. They knew they were the best people in their community, the most righteous, and were quite satisfied with what they were. The great need of the world, as they saw it, was for the rest of the world to measure up to them—not for all men, including themselves to measure up to a more godly standard. It was the other people who needed to be improved, not them. Jesus singed their hides by calling them "blind leaders of the blind."

The Pharisees we have always with us. There is probably one lurking in every last one of us, ready to rise up on the slightest excuse and assert himself. If we have a little something other people haven't got—a better education, a nicer house, swankier friends, a bit of sophistication, a specialized appreciation, an unusual background of experience, addiction to a highbrow magazine—we are tempted to think this somehow elevates us above the rest of men. "We are so little and vain," said Pascal, "that the esteem of five or six persons

about us is enough to content and amuse us." If we can get that esteem (and few of us are so lacking in resources that we cannot) we may find ourselves forming little mutual admiration societies of these five or six or twenty persons, and taking great pleasure in constituting a body of the best citizens, or the most intelligent citizens, or the most progressive citizens, or the most solid citizens, or the right-thinkingest citizens, and be satisfied to remain as we are, deplored that so few of the rest of the community measure up to our virtues.

This is one of the grave dangers the peoples of the Allied Nations must beware of at the end of the war: the pride of the victors. It will be easy to imagine that all the evil emanated from, and resided in, the defeated nations, and that the victors do not stand under any urgent need of improvement themselves. Proud people do not recognize themselves as standing under judgment: it is always the other fellow who is to be judged. They possess no awareness of their own blindness, limitations, poverty, nakedness, defects and failures; no vivid awareness of God's high requirements, such as prompted the writer of Second Isaiah to say: "For we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; we all do fade as a leaf."

The proud never see themselves as indicted. Instead of recognizing themselves as living under the same divine judgment under which all human creatures dwell, they derive their chief moral pleasure from sitting in judgment on the rest of men. For this reason their moral development is arrested. And they can never move forward to a higher development—to an improvement of their love and service, or to an increased purity of motive—until this pride is reduced.

The Pharisees characteristically think of themselves as

the improvers and saviors of the world. But their pride unfits them to do this job. They cannot do a genuinely creative work because no creativeness is at work in them. They cannot bring a renewed life to the world because they themselves are not the vessels into which a continuous renewal of life is being poured. Before anyone can hope to work a moral transformation in the life of the world, a moral transformation (and a continuing moral transformation) must be worked (and must be still working) in him.

IV

In his autobiography, *The Confession of an Octogenarian*, L. P. Jacks reproduces the last sermon he had preached. He took his cue in that sermon from a writer who had said that preachers ought to spend less effort in giving advice, "of which there is a superfluity at the present day," and give more energy to recording their experience of life, "even to the extent of openly confessing their own faults, failures and deficiencies."

"I am about to make such a confession," said Jacks. And he began it in this fashion:

I hear a great deal of talk about the Kingdom of God and the Brotherhood of Man—this mainly in the churches; and about certain ideal social systems which reformers would set up—this mainly on public platforms, in debating societies and books. But when I look into myself I see at once that I lack the personal qualities I should need to play a worthy part in either the Kingdom of God, or in any of the ideal social systems. I am too imperfect a man for the heroic life I should have to live, for the noble deeds I should have to do. I am not wise enough, not reasonable enough, not self-forgetful enough, not humane enough, not valiant enough. I am lacking the patience, the self-

control, the moral skill, the discipline, that would be required of me. I am aware of habits in myself which would constantly trip me up, and perhaps trip other people as well.²

Here is a man who sees the truth. If he did not make that confession in pride (for we can be proud of our vices as well as of our virtues), here is a man who has his hand on the latch of the door to Christian wisdom. He sees that his main business is to fit himself for citizenship in the Kingdom, not to proclaim, as many do, that they are the builders of this Kingdom. God is the builder. If we can throw away our pride, He may be able to make useful carpenters and masons out of us. Men never move nearer to the Kingdom of God until they see and feel the rules for citizenship in that Kingdom pressing down upon *them*, calling for a new order of life in them.

In Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* one of the pilgrims proounds an edifying riddle to his fellows:

He that will kill, must first be overcome;
Who would live abroad, first must die at home.

The answer to the riddle is given also in the form of verse:

He first by Grace must conquered be,
That Sin would mortify;
And who, that lives, would convince me,
Unto himself must die.

The proud do not understand this, and so are unable to fit themselves for the kind of service that restores the broken, builds up the good, and raises life to a new level. Said Jesus: "You must not let men call you master, for you have only one master: the Christ." But the proud cannot bend their necks so low. They insist on being the masters.

² P. 258, The Macmillan Company, 1942.

Chapter VI

SERVICE

I

The Christian lives in the rôle of a servant of God according to the way of sacrifice. When I say "according to the way of sacrifice" that does not add anything to the meaning of the first statement, but only helps clear away a possible confusion.

Our business men have gotten hold of the word *service* and used it as an advertising slogan. "He who serves best profits most" is a familiar motto. But when Christianity speaks of service it is referring to a kind of life rather than to the making of money, and the kind of life to which it refers involves the principle of sacrifice.

"This is my body broken for you," said Jesus as he distributed the bread at the last supper. That is Christian service; and while there is a gain in it, there is not a "profit." St. Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome: "I beseech you, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God; for that is your spiritual service (or your proper and reasonable vocation)." "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children," says the Letter to the Ephesians, "and walk in love, even as Christ loved you, and gave himself up as an offering and a sacrifice." That's it. If we will think of service as the offering of ourselves to God, we will not be confused about its meaning.

II

I have a notion that in this matter of service we are dealing with the most practical thing in the Christian life. Not the most important thing, but the most practical, the thing in the Christian life which comes closest to being tangible and measurable; the area of Christian living where it is most difficult to make pretenses and fool ourselves.

We can think we are worshiping in spirit and in truth when we are only going through the motions or caressing certain emotions. We can imagine that we have thankful hearts when we are only pleased with the weather. We can put on the airs of humility and inwardly be as proud as peacocks. We can work up a warm, tender, expansive feeling that doesn't produce any consistent or sustained activity, and call it love. But it is a little harder to deceive both our neighbors and ourselves when it comes to service, because here we are more immediately and more frequently subjected to practical tests. We are confronted with too many situations that bluntly ask us: "Well, what are you willing to do? How much are you willing to give?" And although none of us is deficient in excuse-making, a thin excuse never quite conceals our nakedness. In fact, nothing more clearly reveals the poverty of our dedication than the cheap excuses we make for ourselves. They fairly shout forth our insincerity, our indifference, our laziness, our love of self.

I think we can get into the core of this subject most quickly by noting something that Coventry Patmore, an English poet and critic of the nineteenth century, once said about saints. Patmore was interested in studying the records of the saints, and reported that whenever he encountered a real one (as distinguished from merely an official one) he

found him uncommonly like an ordinary man. A genuine saint, he said, had not the slightest desire to separate himself from the common life, and did not live in the studied rôle of a saint, but was just a saint. Another observation Patmore made was that a saint never seemed to have much use for his time, but was always ready to give time to others. This last is a very shrewd observation.

Time is a most mysterious thing. We do not know what it is. But we hold it in precious regard, carefully measuring it out in minutes and hours. We probably measure more things in terms of time than in any other terms. Even money, one of our commonest measurements, is often calculated upon the basis of the time involved. We plan our living in terms of time, and in a curious way we identify our life with time. Time is the space in which we live and move and have our being. It is looked upon as one of our basic necessities and natural rights. We develop an obsession, an acquisitiveness, a miserliness about time as easily and as often as about money. We try to gain time, save time, hoard time for ourselves. For every person who thinks that a lot of money would give him the freedom he desires, there is another who thinks a lot of time would do the same. My experience is that it is harder to pry a gift of time out of people than a contribution of cash.

I remember the not distant days when we were shaking the bushes trying to stir up volunteers to spot airplanes. A certain lady of my acquaintance who had nothing to do but cook three meals a day for her able-bodied husband and look after their apartment said, when first asked, that she didn't have the time, and those three meals were her excuse. Moreover, she was a loudly professing patriot. If anybody in the village had displayed the American flag improperly, she would have been among the first to shout about it. Across

the street from this lady lived another with five children and a boarder. She immediately said Yes to the proposition.

You see how shrewdly Patmore selected when he singled out the willingness to give time as one of the marks of the saint. Mr. C. S. Lewis hit on this also when he wrote the letters of that senior devil, Screwtape, to one of his stooges on earth. "Now you will have noticed," wrote Screwtape, "that nothing throws your patient into a passion so easily as to find a tract of time which he had reckoned on having at his own disposal unexpectedly taken from him. It is the unexpected visitor (when he looked forward to a quiet evening to himself), or the friend's talkative wife turning up (when he looked forward to a *tête-à-tête* with the friend), that throw him out of gear. . . . These anger him because he regards his time as his own and feels that it is being stolen. You must therefore zealously guard in your patient's mind the curious assumption that his time is his own. Let him have the feeling that he starts out each day as the lawful possessor of twenty-four hours. Let him feel as a grievous tax that portion of his property which he has to make over to his employers, and as a generous donation that further portion which he allows to religious duties."¹

Screwtape then goes on to admit to his agent that this line of thought is pure nonsense. Of course the man doesn't own any time. He can neither make nor retain a single instant of time. It all comes to him as a pure gift, and he might as well regard the sun and the moon as his private property.

Well, a Christian is one who has come to the realization that he doesn't own time. He uses it, but it was given or lent to him; and the divine Giver (or Lender) bestows it upon

¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, p. 106 f., The Macmillan Company, 1944.

us for a purpose. The Christian endeavors to use it for this purpose, and therefore, as Coventry Patmore said, he is willing to give time away in service.

III

This is the case with regard to all our basic possessions, which, *basically*, are not our possessions at all, but the gifts of Another to us. As it is with our time, so is it with our talents and capacities; so is it with our energy, with our bodies, with our life. These, also, are given to us. We are their *stewards*. They have been placed in our trust. For what purpose shall we use them? That is the basic moral, philosophical, religious, practical question faced by man; and on the answer to that question all the possible diversities in ways of living hinge.

Some people view these gifts as their own possessions, using them for their own enjoyment, their own schemes, or even for the satisfaction of such curious whims as that of the wicked and slothful servant who buried his talent in the ground.

Take, for instance, that collection of faculties and talents we group under the word "intellect." What are our minds for? Some of us use them so little one might think they are for nothing but connecting the nervous system and co-ordinating our muscles. Some of us use them to think up ways of getting out of work and side-stepping responsibilities. (We have a folk saying that "Only fools and horses work.") Some of us use them to devise clever schemes for taking advantage of our fellows. Some of us use them to defend and justify ourselves. Some of us use them to spread lies against our neighbors and in behalf of our clique or party. Some of us use them to become clever, or learned, or

brilliant; to show off; or for the mere purpose of intellectual and esthetic enjoyment. Some of us use them, as we would say, "just to earn a living." But none of these uses of the mind satisfies the requirements of Christianity. None of them rises up to the level of Christian service, to the level of dedication to God, who gives us the powers of the mind, and gives them for a purpose. That purpose is to learn the truth, to pursue the truth, and to cleave to the truth. And this has not been done until we have found that truth about God and his will which redeems our lives from sordidness and destruction.

The Christian requirement is that *all* these borrowed possessions of our beings—our time, our capacities, our energy, our bodies—are to be used in the service of God in a "living sacrifice."

Consider the case of our bodies. We live in our bodies and set great store by them. We spend a great deal of time feeding them, bathing them, dressing and undressing them. We take them to the beauty parlor, the barber shop, the dentist, the doctor, the clothier. We derive pain and pleasure from them and through them. We tend to identify ourselves with our bodies. Some of us live as if our bodies constitute all there is of us, think and act as if a person is his flesh and nothing more. But the Christian insight goes deeper than that. None of the achievements of life that we most admire are built on such a philosophy. We would have had no heroes if there had not been some who understood that the body is not man, but a kind of flunkey to be put to a higher service.

In March, 1943, a man died in England by the name of Harold Suggars. I had never heard of him until I read his brief obituary in the paper, yet all the world is indebted to him. He was the last of four English pioneers in the develop-

ment of X-ray therapy. Forty-one years earlier he had been a carpenter. For some odd reason he volunteered to assist Ernest Harnack in his X-ray laboratory. Harnack warned him fully of the dangers to which he would be exposing himself. He showed Suggars his own deeply scarred hands, but Suggars was willing to go ahead. Within a year he noticed the first effects of the X-rays on his skin. When Harnack died his hands had been completely destroyed up to the wrists. Suggars kept on for thirty-eight years, and when he retired his skin had been so badly burned that he was unable to walk abroad in the daylight.

Here were men who willingly became mutilated in order that other men might be healed. And this principle of sacrificial service is the principle by which all the great achievements that bless mankind have been brought forth, and the principle according to which all true and noble living is patterned. Some are required to be martyrs in order that the truth may have its witnesses. Some are required to lay down their lives in order that freedom and right may be preserved and justice advanced. But all of us who would live aright and worthily—who would be the “salt of the earth,” as Jesus put it, or who would be “worth his salt,” as a familiar expression has it—must do likewise in the less dramatic walks of common life. We have duties; we have responsibilities; we are called to serve and offer ourselves to transcendent and eternal purposes. The true worth of a life is measured by the degree to which one does this.

When St. Francis of Assisi came to die he begged pardon of “brother ass the body” for having driven it so hard and unduly ill-treated it in the service of God. And that is the Christian view of all these marvelous faculties, gifts, powers over which the Creator has given us temporal dominion. We are made to be servants: servants of the good, of the

right, of the true, of the supreme and holy God who created us and all things, and on whom our life depends. After all, this service is only our proper way of saying "Thank You" to God. In giving it we find our reasonable and supreme vocation.

IV

Samuel Longfellow wrote a hymn which begins:

God's trumpet wakes the slumbering world:
Now each man to his post!
The red-cross banner is unfurled:
Who joins the glorious host?
He who in fealty to the truth,
And counting all the cost,
Doth consecrate his gen'rous youth—
He joins the noble host!

That is saying, in an exclamatory manner, what St. Paul wrote in his Letter to the Colossians: "Whatever be your task, work at it heartily, as servants of the Lord and not of men. . . . Remember, you have a master in heaven." Of course Paul was assuming that one is engaged in a useful task, one beneficial to mankind—a thing, unfortunately, not true of many tasks and enterprises in the world. But take the matter of building houses. Houses are useful, houses are important. How many houses are built honestly? How often do the architect, the contractor, the carpenters, masons, plumbers, painters, plasterers, and whatnot make the best house they know how to build within the physical limits set for them? How many of them work with a sense of dedication to good workmanship, with a desire to put up in that community the most serviceable, durable and beautiful houses it is practicable to provide? And how many of them

say to themselves, "Oh, that'll do; we can get away with that; we can unload it before the shoddiness becomes apparent"?

An old creed has it that the "chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." That is essentially true and adequate and beautiful. It would be very hard to state the case better in so few words. The Christian servant is simply one who lives to glorify God rather than himself.

Chapter VII

LOVE

I

A Christian is one who has come to be motivated by love. Love is so necessary, said St. Paul, that without it we get nowhere and amount to nothing:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

Love, said the First Letter of John, is the quintessential quality of God. It *is* God, and it is also man's way of reaching God:

God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.

Love is so important, so great, so mighty, said Thomas à Kempis in *The Imitation of Christ*, that whatever we do in love, though the accomplishment appear small, counts tremendously:

Without charity the outward work availeth naught; but whatever is done out of charity, be it ever so simple or so little, all is fruitful. For God weigheth more with how great charity a man doth work than with how great a work he doth.

Dr. Nathaniel J. Burton, in one of his lectures to Yale divinity students, said that "the whole end of theology is

love. It seems hard to realize that this is so, but so it is. If your theology does not make you loving, it has not Christianized you, and to that extent is not a Christian theology. All ecclesiasticism, and all doctrinalizing, is in order to (produce) character, and the soul of character is love."

Love is the Christian measuring stick for our lives; the aim, the goal, the fixed star by which to chart our voyage. The supreme object, says Christianity, is to grow in love, and without that kind of growth all our striving is vanity and futility.

II

I am reminded of a story that comes from the life of Leo Tolstoy. There were four brothers and a sister in the Tolstoy family. When Leo was five years of age his oldest brother, Nicholas, was eleven. Nicholas was a boy of great imagination and used to invent games for the children to play. One day he told them: "I know a secret which, if people knew it, would make everybody happy. There would be no more meanness, no more anger, no more hate, no more wars. No one would go hungry or lack warm clothes in the winter. All would be *Ant-brothers*."

Nicholas had heard of a church among the Moravian people of central Europe called the Moravian Brethren. Since the Russian word for *Moravian* is the same as for *ant*, he had taken it to mean *Ant-brothers*.

And Nicholas, letting his imagination run on, said: "I have written this secret on a little green stick and buried it in a deep cave." But he would not tell the secret, or the place where it was hidden, and the children tried in vain to find it or guess it. Nicholas invented a game about this secret. He would put some boxes or chairs together in the

middle of the room, cover them over with scarfs or blankets, and all the children would get together in this little tent and be Ant-brothers. Leo liked this game very much. He never forgot the pleasant feeling he had when they were all packed warmly together under this snug roof, and it eventually became for him a symbol of the true social ideal, where all humanity would be Ant-brothers living and working together in comradeship under the great tent of the sky.

When Leo Tolstoy grew up he never ceased to believe in that little green stick. Sometimes he thought he had guessed the secret, but then again he felt that he would have to do some more searching for it.

Well, Christianity presents, and has long presented to any and all that will hear and receive it, the secret of this little green stick. Indeed, it is not a secret but an open proclamation. The proclamation is love. And with that proclamation runs a dire warning, namely: that all human endeavor lacking in love is uncreative, can never raise life to a higher level, can never break the bondage of man's frustration.

There are many people who refuse to believe this Christian thesis. They may have various reasons for refusing to believe it, but none of these reasons has ever been substantiated by experience. They may reject love because it is hard to acquire, hard to keep, hard to practice. They may reject it because they prefer to hate. Or they may fail to choose it because they have no desire to reach a higher level. Whatever the reason may be, there are always plenty of people who think they can put one over on the law of God and substitute their own law.

We are living at the present time in an age which widely believes that power, political power and physical power, the power of organization and technology, can raise life to a better level. But there was never an age which did not

widely believe the same. That is a very old and very sad story. If you want to use the chronology of the book of Genesis, this happened the first time in the Garden of Eden, when the first humans assumed that by eating the apple of knowledge (knowledge being power, as Bacon said) they could improve their lot. It happened again with the builders of the Tower of Babel, who thought they could reverse the tables of creation by a mere engineering feat. The attempt to transform the earth into something nicer; to build up good, increase joy and regenerate life through the assertion of scheming wit, arrogant will and massed power has been made times without number; and every time it has carried men from one frustration into another. If history has never proved Christ correct, it has certainly never proved him wrong. The dictum of historical experience is that everything which is not accomplished out of goodwill and by means of goodwill is negative.

III

I say this—but it is not *my* idea I am advancing; I am merely repeating the Christian proclamation concerning the Creator's law—I say this while we are prosecuting a grim war. War can hardly be called a work of love, though some people can fight with love among their motives. They can have, and some of them do have, a love of justice and of truth. In order to get all the facts on the record, this fact ought to be recognized. But I am not characterizing this war, or any war fought with the weapons of destruction, as a work of love. It is my firm conviction that we are justified in waging this war; that it would have been unthinkable, unconscionable and dishonorable not to have done so. But the works of war, the accomplishments of war, are negative.

In this tangled and paradoxical life of ours we have to do a number of negative works. We have to put out fires; we have to tear down some things before we can build better ones in their places; we have to resist and restrain evil works and evil men. That is necessary. It is important. But it is only the negative part of the job. When we put out a fire we have not built a house. When we pull something down we have not constructed anything. And when we have quelled a gang of evil men we still have done only a defensive job. If a community rids itself of a band of robbers, it has gotten rid of a band of robbers. That is certainly worth doing. It removes one of the obstacles to orderly life. But the community does not become significantly better until it brings forth a new goodness, or an increased goodness, within itself. When this war is over all the positive work of creating a better world order will remain yet to be done. And if this positive creation cannot be brought forth the human race will simply pass from one set of frustrations into another set of frustrations quite as frustrating as the former.

I suppose most people know this, or would know it if they stopped to consider the problem of life in a true perspective. But a lot of us—all of us some of the time, and some of us all of the time—never see things in their proper perspective because we become absorbed in our objections, our oppositions, our resistances, our fears, peeves and hurts.

Julien Green, the American-French writer, tells about meeting a man in Paris in the 1920's who was launching a new magazine and wanted Green to write something for it. The purpose of the magazine, said the prospective editor-publisher (who was a Communist), was to publish something "aggressive and dangerous, something that will start trouble." "Start trouble?" asked Green. "Why, yes. You can

do it. Write thirty or forty pages. Attack something or someone. Have you no grievances?" he added, as he saw a bewildered expression on Green's face. "Can it be that you manage to live without some kind of grievance?"¹

That episode is a parable on the type of motivation with which many of us live a good deal of the time. We live on grievances. We are urged on by peeves, envies, fears and dislikes. We have encountered evil; we have been hurt, deprived of something, treated roughly, threatened or frightened, and for the rest of our lives our energy is devoted to working out these negations. Not a few persons at the age of fifty are still fighting over and over again the battles of their childhood and adolescence. For everyone who knows what he is working for, there are several who know what they are working against, and who are more conscious of their hostilities than of their positive devotions.

Our negativistic endeavors need not show themselves in an ugly dress; they may, and frequently do, work under the guise of idealism. Not all negativists are out-and-out destructionists who would define their aims in terms of starting trouble. Many of them are reformers imagining themselves to have the best interests of mankind at heart. Bertrand Russell has said that Madame Roland, "who is frequently represented as a noble woman inspired by devotion to the people," became a vehement democrat through the experience of being shown into the servants' hall when she had occasion to visit an aristocrat's chateau. This may, or may not, be true with regard to Madame Roland. Bertrand Russell himself is too full of negativisms to be trusted too much, and loves to go out of his way to make a cynical wise-crack. But the statement is certainly true of a great many

¹ Julien Green, *Memories of Happy Days*, p. 253 f., Harper and Brothers.

other ladies and gentlemen; and while they may do a useful bit of negative work, it is only a negative work which they do.

We all agree, I presume, that aristocrats are well gotten rid of; but getting rid of aristocrats does not establish a democratic society. Disposing of the enemy does not in itself create a good life.

It is on this fact that so many reforms and reformers stub their toes. It is over this unperceived law of God that so much of man's political activity trips and sprawls in the dust. Politics so easily resolves itself into a matter of mere oppositions. Political leaders find it expedient to draw upon people's animosities and play upon their fears, so that political energy frequently exhausts itself in getting somebody out of power, in clipping somebody's wings, in quelling a particular group, in undoing a particular policy. Maybe all this is actually justified; for there are usually men who ought to be gotten out of power, groups that ought to be quelled, policies that ought to be undone. But political effort so often expends itself in these negative accomplishments; contents itself with paying off a score, getting rid of something irksome, working off a boilerful of indignation, that it does not go on to create a new welfare. The positive motivation of love and goodwill is lacking. And this is why politics has a way of becoming forever dreary, perennially tiring and repeatedly disappointing.

IV

Some psychologists point proudly and hopefully to a process of human nature they call "sublimation." This is where a person expresses his negativisms in terms of idealism. Instead of just making trouble, he makes trouble in

the name of good causes. His hate of aristocrats is turned into advocating democracy. His unpleasant experiences with schools and school teachers make him an educational reformer. His revulsions, his indignations at this and that, his grievances, prompt him to work for such an alteration of things that these unhappinesses will not recur. This is what psychologists call sublimation, and they often refer to it as one of the creative and redemptive processes of human history.

But Christianity is not so easily fooled as that, takes a less superficial view of redemption and creativity. It has among its categories a thing called "the whitened sepulchre," which outwardly appears beautiful, but inwardly is full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. It recognizes a thing described as the cup washed on the outside, but not washed on the inside. Christianity presses its inquiry into the hidden springs of our life, is concerned with the character of our motivation. It understands that a man who is merely working out a rebellion, a fear, a spite, a revulsion, an anger, any kind of a negativism, is still a negativist, no matter how he may dress his motivation, both for his own eyes and for the eyes of others. He may do some useful things of a negative nature; but he is not a creator of good, and he is not a person in whom the yeast of redemption works.

"Sublimation," as the psychologists are content to define it, is not enough; it may be only a disguise. Sublimation does not necessarily signify that a person's motivation has been transformed, and Christianity insists upon that transformation. It calls not simply for good works; it calls for good motivation, for the miracle of the purified heart, the miracle of the new man; because it understands very well that the good works of the badly motivated person are mostly an illusion to the beholder and a self-deception to

the doer. As St. Paul put it: "If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love," I have done nothing of great value.

The Christian requirement about love is that we shall learn to get our motivation onto that positive basis; that we shall grow in this direction, learning to put more and more of our motivation more completely onto that positive basis, coming to direct our enterprises less and less by our negativisms, and more and more from love. Love is the "new creation" of which the New Testament speaks. A new creation must be a *morally* new creation, or it isn't really a new creation. It is just a whitewash job, or a rearrangement of the same old furniture.

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